Revamped Public Distribution System in Gujarat

2233. SHRI AHMED PATEL: Will the Minister of CIVIL SUPPLIES, CONSUMER AFFAIRS AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are aware that large scale diversion of PDS commodities takes place in the Revamped Public Distribution System (RPDS) in the State of Gujarat with the connivance of Fair Price shopkeepers and officials of Supplies Department of the State;

(b) if so, whether Government have detected such diversion in the State during the last three years and details thereof, district and year-wise; and

(c) the action taken by Government in such cases and also to prevent diversion of PDS items by FP shopkeepers with active connivance of officials in RPDS in Gujarat?

THE MINISTER OF FOOD AND MINISTER OF CIVIL SUPPLIES, CONSUMER AFFAIRS AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (SHRI DEVENDRA PRASAD YADAV): (a) to (c) Under the joint responsibility, the operational responsibility of Public Distribution System (PDS) at FPS level vests entirely with the State Government. The Central Government has not recieved any specific complaints of diversion of PDS commodities under Revamped PDS in the State of Gujarat.

Rise in Non-Tariff Barriers

2234. SHRI GHUFRAN AZAM:
SHRI KRISHNA KUMAR BIRLA:

Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether attention of Government have been drawn to the news-item captioned "Non-tariff barriers on the rise" as reported in Pioneer dated 16th July, 1996;

(b) if so, whether according to the study conducted by FIOCI, it has been revealed that the use of non-tariff barriers have increased since the past few years; and

(c) if so, further reaction Government thereto?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE (SHRI BOLLA BULLI RAMAIAH): (a) to (c) Yes, Sir. The Government has identified Non-Tariff Barriers imposed by India's Major Trading Partners. Such barriers include textiles quotas, anti-dumping and counter-vailing duties, strict standards relating to health and environment etc. Most of such protectionist measures are consistant with the relevant GATT/WTO Agreements. Never theless, the non-tariff barriers identified by us are taken up bilaterally with our trading partners to ensure that market access of Indian exporters is not unreasonably hindered by these trading partners. In case of any inconsistency or discrimination, India has a right to approach the WTO dispute settlement mechanism for redressal.

Health hazards due to asbestos

2235. SHRI K.R. MALKANI: Will the Minister of INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that asbestos is very injurious to health as reported in the International Herald Tribune dated 4th July, 1996;

(b) whether for that reasons U.S.A. banned it twenty years ago;

(c) whether France has also banned it after it saw that 2,000 persons a year were losing their life as a result of cancer caused by asbestos;

(d) whether Government would consider banning asbestos if so, by when; and

(e) if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF INDUSTRY (SHRI MURASOLI MARAN): (a) Asbestos Fibre is one of the several

materials which are occupational health hazards, if not used under controlled conditions.

(b) Although the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) of U.S.A. issued orders prohibiting future manufacture etc. of almost all asbestos-containing products, this was struck down by the Court of Appeals in 1991 as EPA failed to convince the Court with needed scientific justification to ban asbestos.

(c) Based on a report by the National Institute for Scientific and Medical Research, the French Government is reported to be considering imposition of a ban on use of the cancer-causing insulation fibre w.e.f. 1.1.1997. However, estimate of 2,000 deaths is reported to have been made assuming that out of all the cases of deaths caused by lung cancer, 5.7% are asbestos related cases.

(d) and (e) Use of Blue (Crocidolite) fibre which is considered as toxic and a health hazard has already been banned by the Government. There is no need of banning asbestos as India is using only Waite (Chrysotile) asbestos which contains only about 8-9% of white asbestos fibre and is, therefore, safe in use. A Technical Committee which was constituted in 1994 to undertake a comprehensive study of use of asbestos had recommended use of white fibre under controlled conditions and conforming to all standards prescribed by the Bureau of Indian Standards. This is insisted upon in the production of asbestos products.

import of Agricultural inputs

2236. SHRI BHUPINDER SINGH MANN: Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether agriculture inpute/latest technology or knowhow are allowed to be imported by exporting agricultural produce;

(b) if not, the restrictions imposed on import of the above;

(c) whether these restrictions would be done away with by Government; and

(d) if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE (SHRI BOLLA BULLI RAMAIAH): (a) to (d) Capital goods including those required for the agricultural sector, is permitted to be imported oh payment of concessional duty @ 15% of c.i.f. value of imported goods or zero duty if the c.i.f. value of capital goods is Rs. 20 crores or more, subject to export of the agricultural product manufactured by the capital goods so imported at the prescribed rate of export obligation, under the Export Promotion Capital Goods Scheme.

Similarly, agricultural inputs for the exports of agricultural products can also be imported without payment of the Customs duty under the Duty Exemption Scheme (DES) against prescribed export obligation.

सुपर बाजार की प्रचालन लागत

2237. श्री कनक सिंह मोहन सिंह मंगरोलाः क्या नागरिक आपूर्ति, उपभोक्ता मामले और सार्वजनिक वितरण मंत्री यह बताने की कृपा करेंगे किः

(क) क्या पिछले कुछ वर्षों से सुपर बाजार की प्रचालन लागत में लगातार वृद्धि हो रही है;

(ख) यदि हां, तो वर्ष 1989-90 से ऐसी वृद्धि का मद-वार, वर्ष-वार और शाखा-वार ब्यौरा क्या है; और

(ग) यदि हां, तो इसके क्या कारण हैं?

खाद्य मंत्री और नागरिक पूर्ति, उपभोक्ता मामले और सार्वजनिक वितरण मंत्री (श्री देवेन्द्र प्रसाद यादव): (क) से (ग) सुपर बाजार दिल्ली द्वारा भेजी गई सूचना के अनुसार, सुपर बाजार की संचलानात्मक लागत में निरन्तर वृद्धि होती रही है। इस